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ABSTRACT

The evolution of an integrated library instruction package is discussed, and guidelines are provided for the systematic development of a particular program. Topics considered include choice of topic, definition of audience, instructional objectives, writing the script, and evaluation of the program. (Author/JD)

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION I:

DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

by

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Bibliographic Instruction I:Development of an Instructional Program

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My purpose in this paper is to describe briefly some points to be considered in the development of a specific program of bibliographic instruction for your library. Some of my comments may appear to be obvious or merely common sense, however, I feel strongly that many bibliographic instruction programs fail because these basic points were not addressed early in the developmental stages.

Bibliographic instruction is predicated on the assumption that library users need assistance in effective utilization of library resources and that librarians are qualified to provide it. Another assumption is that providing detailed assistance on demand, although important, and in many cases desirable, is not always the most effective solution for librarian and user alike. Bibliographic instruction involves going beyond the bounds of "traditional reference services". It is active rather than passive and involves determining choice of programs as well as content and scope. It is important to note at the outset that bibliographic instruction can use any format. It can be live, as in a lecture. It can be print, as in a printed guide to a subject field or reference tool, or a variety of audio-visual formats can be used.

Let's assume that you are considering a specific bibliographic instruction for your library - what are some of the points you should consider? Although I will discuss these concepts one at a time, please note that this is not necessarily a linear program.

The first point to consider is the <u>need</u> for the program. If your user community does not have a need for the program, there is no point in doing it.

We are not dealing with learning in an abstract sense, or learning for the sheer joy of learning. Library users will be motivated only to learn what is meaningful to them. They will need to be convinced that knowledge gained will increase their efficiency and their effectiveness. Consider the level of complexity of the subject matter. For example, does a special or university library need a program telling people how to use the Applied Science and Technology Index? Will that not be self evident to your users? Another aspect to consider is the frequency of inquiry. How often does the problem come up? If the answer is once every three years, you may not want to devote much time to it. If you determine that your program involves information your user community wants or needs, and if your required levels of complexity and frequency of inquiry are met, you will want to proceed to the next step.

What is the purpose of the program? It is helpful to state your goals in writing a list of all the things you want the program to do. Consider both major and minor points. Then decide how you are going to accomplish them, what will be the chronology for presenting the information.

Consider the scope of your program next. Some points to be considered are: materials to be covered; depth of coverage required; the amount of time to be devoted to the program. If you are in an academic setting, will the course be offered for credit? How will that effect what you cover? Clearly, a variety of options exist. You might decide to provide a one hour seminar on the use of Chemical Abstracts or you might choose to spend 8-10 hours introducing your users to a variety of sources of information in the field of chemistry. Both possibilities have equal validity. You will have to make a determination based on time constraints, as well as your users' need for information. When considering the scope of your program, it is important to remember that most people can only absorb so much information in a given period of time. Be careful not to overload your audience. Too much data will result in fatigue and negative feelings concerning the learning experience.

Consider your audience. Who is the program designed for? The need of different groups vary. The style you might use in dealing with undergraduate students may not be best for senior scientific staff in an industrial library. Sometimes it is necessary to separate materials for staff training from materials designed for the user community. If you want to provide your audience with hands-on experience with a set of materials you will have to limit class size. Ten people would be a good upward limit. For larger groups a lecture format would be more appropriate.

If you are doing the program live, using either a seminar or lecture format, you can refer to location of materials within your library, and provide information about specialized services. If you are using a mediated approach, you will need to decide if the program is to be of strictly local interest or if you want to make it available to other organizations. If you choose the former; you can leave the local detail in; if you choose the latter, omit all local detail. For example, if you were developing a mediated program on the use of government documents to be used only in your library, it's fine to say they are located on the seventh floor arranged in by document number. If you want your program to have more general appeal, stick to the facts that will remain constant from one library to another.

The environment in which the program will be used also needs to be considered. If you are in a university and integrating your program into the existing course structure, you will need faculty cooperation and administrative approval. You might vary your presentation depending if you are giving it in a lecture hall, laboratory or library. If you are developing a mediated program for use in the library, will it be available at all times, or only on demand? Will it be set out for users or will they have to ask for it? Your answers to these questions will influence the type of program you choose to develop.

Budget and format should be considered together as they are obviously linked. I will briefly discuss alternatives in ascending order

of their cost. Please note that the most expensive format is not necessarily the best. You will have to make the determination of what is best for you. You will also need to make this determination within your budget.

Seminar/Lecture

Obviously, this is the least expensive to produce. (In all cases we assume your time is donated). It has the advantage of being interactive and can be modified to meet the needs of each group. In small groups you can provide for hands-on experience. The chief disadvantage is that it requires your presence, and preparation by you each time the program is given.

Printed Handout

The cost here is minimal. The product can be extemely successful. If you want your product to be used it must be graphically attractive and brief. Good packaging is important. One or two pages is the limit. Consider what you know about advertising and marketing. The same techniques work here.

Audio tape & Slide/tape

A very good choice in short (under 10 minutes) topics such as how to use the card catalogue or how to use Engineering Index. Playback equipment is required. A librarian is not, as these programs can be made available to the user at all times the library is open. Cost of production is moderately inexpensive. However, you may need outside help to produce these programs. For example, to produce an audiotape you will need access to recording equipment as well as someone with a trained voice to provide the narration.

Film

Suitable for longer topics. This is an expensive medium to work in. You will need extensive professional assistance. Recording facilities are in general not available within your organizations.

Videotape

Again, a very expensive medium to work in. Again, professional back up is required. Playback facilities more likely to be available within your organization. This is an excellent medium for presenting lengthy topics. Can be easily played back when the user needs the information.

Once you have selected the format for your program in view of budgetary as well as other criteria. It is time to develop your script. Several points to keep in mind.

Allow plenty of time for this process. Keep refining your product. If you are using a mediated format, keep in mind that spoken English is not the same as written English and you want a product that will sound pleasant as well as one that is easy to say.

Keep the organization clear. The old maxim "Tell them what you are going to say, say it and tell them what you just said," is a good thought to keep in mind. It helps people to learn and to remember.

Be very careful in your use of humor and slang. You can get into trouble by being "cute". Consider the kinds of things you find offensive and avoid them. It may be a good idea to stick to clean straight-forward English.

In summary, the development of a bibliographic instruction program can be a rewarding and stimulating experience. You learn and your users learn. Keep in mind that a successful bibliographic instruction program does not develop in a vacuum, and that you must consider the need for the program, the purpose of the program, the scope of the program, your audience, the environment in which the program will be used as well as your budget. You must select the format that

will be best for your situation. Due consideration to these factors will result in a successful bibliographic intruction program.